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ABSTRACT

Students in the two-year English education program at Trenton State College are asked to develop sourcebooks that contain their original writings, as well as "found" pieces about teaching and learning. The sourcebooks encourage students' on-going exploration of their past school experiences, the reasons for their decision to become English teachers, and their anticipations for their future teaching careers. Varied and changing resources are provided to guide and stimulate the students. These resources, which include works on education, autobiographical works, and autobiographical poems, may be used by students either as models for their own writing or as stimuli for response. Students who are involved in practicums in junior and senior high schools are asked to include in their sourcebooks regular accounts of successes and failures with pupils. (This document includes a list of resources that have been provided to students.) (GW)

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GUIDELINES ON TEACHER PREPARATION: THE SOURCEBOOK

The sourcebook is a way for students to find their sources both as English and education majors. It is an on-going exploration of self in writing within the two-year program in English Education at Trenton State College. I ask students to pick their way systematically to themselves as English majors, as prospective teachers, above all, as individuals who have been schooled, who have lived x-number of hours/days of their lives in school and who have chosen learning as it happens in school as their way of life.

To enter and engage in the sourcebook, students test this hypothesis: I love language -- the English language in particular -- and I want to perpetuate the language activities by which human beings live their lives, the language activities in which they engage in their work and play.

The sourcebook is doubly productive. First, it requires that students do themselves the activities they will have their students perform after they have passed the rites of passage into the profession. Second, it sends them searching inside themselves and outside -- all around -- for ways in which learning happens and works and for ways in which teachers BECOME. The process which generates this project is exercise and practice in the best sense of those words. It is a process guaranteeing that English Education majors understand themselves as students and teachers-to-be. The kind of understanding they derive helps them proceed self-consciously, again in the best sense of awareness, through the program that we have designed to prepare them for teaching.

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In his prologue to Places Where I've Done Time,[1] William Saroyan provides the keynote for this enterprise:

> Places make us -- let's not imagine that once we're here anything else does. First genes, then places -- after that it's every man for himself, God help us, and good luck to one and all.
>
> The fascinating thing most likely though is how the same place -- a miserable school, for instance, with rotten teachers -- bores one man into art, and drives another into crime -- the only two arenas we really have: art, making; crime, taking. The genes, the genes, cries the man who believes inheritance, not environment does it. But does it? Alone? I have never seen poor people in the slums who were not equal to being instantly clean and refined in a mansion with a million dollars. And take away the millionaire's money and put him in the slums and how elegant will he be fighting mice and cockroaches?
>
> Yes all well and good perhaps you are saying, but doesn't that mean that people make us? Of course, but people are places. (p. ii)

In the spirit of Saroyan, students examine school as a total locus: intellectual, emotional, social, psychological, physiological. By way of their own writings and the selections they find to put in their books, they seek out where they have been in school, where they are going as school people, what kind of school-place they will create for their students when they gain a classroom and classes to teach.

For students in the Junior Professional Experience at Trenton State College who come to me for the course in methods of teaching English, the sourcebook begins with once-a-week journal accounts based on their first classroom experience with children. Because JPE is an initial practicum in which they actually teach, sharing junior or senior high school classes with one or two other English Education majors, they have the chance to describe and analyze one

success and one failure for each week of the semester. For seniors during their solo field experience, the sourcebook continues with journalings for any three of their five-day teaching week. As they did the previous year, they describe and analyze their successes and failures.

The sourcebook contains other components such as original poems, songs, plays, essays, snippets, letters about learning plus found pieces about teaching/learning. The original pieces derive from students' lives in school. They begin with their junior year in college and return slowly, deliberately, delicately as well as unsparingly into their school past. Using memory to unfold the veils, they strip away the layers of sophistication and dross. Their aim is to unseal in every sense of the act, to understand why they have decided to go to school forever -- and in the process of unsealing dispel the "mystification" which surrounds their choice. If they succeed in their efforts, they recapture what R. D. Laing (2) sees as the "innocence, truth and love" of their untampered and unhampered perceptions:

> As adults, we have forgotten most of our childhood, not only its contents but its flavor; as men of the world, we hardly know of the existence of the inner world: we barely remember our dreams, and make little sense of them when we do; as for our bodies, we retain just sufficient proprioceptive sensations to coordinate our movements and to ensure the minimal requirements for biosocial survival -- to register fatigue, signals for food, sex, defecation, sleep; beyond that, little or nothing. Our capacity to think, except in the service of what we are dangerously deluded in supposing is our self-interest and in conformity with common sense, is pitifully limited: our capacity even to see, hear, touch, taste and smell is so shrouded in veils of mystification that an intensive discipline of unlearning is necessary for anyone before one can begin to experience the world afresh, with innocence, truth and love. (p. 26)

Everything that goes into the scrapbook-come-sourcebook attends to answering the question: What must I do to ready myself for five classes a day, five days a week, with overtime and x-number of hours each night for preparation and homework? Throughout the semester, students share their books with each other to discover commonalities and uniquenesses. The books are also shared with me. I reciprocate in the sharing process by providing varied and changing resources to guide and stimulate students' explorations. Those resources may be used as either models or subjects for response. The selections which serve as models may be poems or essays. For example, in "Look for the Rusty Lining,"(3) Ralph Schoenstein describes himself as a consummate worrier and compares his talent for worrying with the art as practiced by his grandfather:

> My grandfather's hobby was worrying, and although hobbies are not usually thought of as being inheritable, I am a talented worrier, too. My grandfather's glum genes, which skipped my merry father, have reflowered in me as a major, all-purpose anxiety. A few weeks ago, for example, I learned that collapsing stars called black holes may soon suck up all the matter in the universe. Because I read this in Vogue, I hoped at first that the black holes were some kind of fad -- a celestial pop event like Kohoutek or UFOs -- but then I saw that the author of the article had been a twice visiting member at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, and I knew that another crisis was at hand. Ominously, the Institute is just down the street from where I do my worrying. (p. 31)

In writing about themselves a la Schoenstein, students try to be truthful in a humorous vein and provide substantial evidence to document their "hobbies." Here are the beginnings of two variations by students:

> Someday I plan to pen an illustrated guide to making silk purses of sows' ears. I really do believe there's a way. I am an honorary member of OA

(Optimists Anonymous) and the perfect example of the proverbial "cockeyed optimist." This dubious trait I have inherited from my mother. Dubious because it has earned me many friends and many enemies (who, I'm sure, will one day be friends). I have to say only from my mother because my father's favorite maxim is, "If something can go wrong, it will, and at the worst possible time." I can't understand how they have stayed married for so long. (4)

I look at my father and wonder if someday I will be like him. I am referring to a trait that we both have in common, but of a greater degree in my father. However, I predict that sometime in the future we will be equal in our meticulousness. I have already found that the gap closes slightly with each passing year.

I can no longer abandon clothes on my bed or chair; instead they must be folded or hung and put away. One sure sign of my sinking deeper is that lately I have been picking up after my brothers. What is happening to me? I'm too young for this. Several weeks ago I was in a poker game. I was constantly kidded about stacking my quarters, dimes and nickels in their respective piles, heads up, of course. I was able to take the teasing with a smile since I was winning. Halfway through the game, I even make a convert out of a previously sloppy-single-pile-of-change card player. Meticulosity gained in popularity that night because my convert began to win too. (5)

Another favorite model is "Wilderness,"[6] a poem by Carl Sandburg, in which he describes himself as a counterpart of various animals, for example, baboon, wolf, fox, hog, eagle:

There is a wolf in me. . . fangs pointed for tearing gashes. . . and the hot lapping of blood -- I keep this wolf because the wilderness gave it to me and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fox in me. . . a silver-gray fox. . . I sniff and guess. . . I pick things out of the wind and air. . . I nose in the dark night and take sleepers and eat them and hide the feathers. . . I circle and loop and double-cross. (p. 100)

Students delight in registering their animal alter egos, thereby explaining certain desirable or undesirable traits.

"The Saroyan Prizes, 1908-1939,"(7) is an interesting autobiographical recitative which makes a revealing and challenging formula for students. It begins:

> Having been awarded prizes,
> Ribbons, money, honors, invitations,
> and other things,
> I, William Saroyan,
> Born August 31, 1908
> In Fresno, California;
> Student at Emerson Public School
> On L Street, between San Benito and Santa Clara;
> Holder of the First Prize for Street Sales,
> The Fresno Evening Herald, 1917;
> Twice winner of the Around-the-Block Race, 1918;
> Founder, Manager, and Boss of Henry-and-
> Willie's Empty Lot for Sons of Armenians,
> Assyrians, and Other Immigrants;
> Winner of Highest Third-Grade Binet-Simon Intelligence Rating,
> "Far Above Average, Although Poor at Arithmetic";
> Official Letter-Writer to Mayor Toomey
> For the Fifth Grade;
> Speaker at the First Meeting
> Of the Parent-Teachers Association;
> Singer of "The River Shannon";
> Author of "How I Earned My First Dollar";
> First to Dive from the Oak Tree
> Into Thompson Ditch at Malaga;
> First to Climb Geggenheim's Water Tank
> And Drop a Cat;
> Most Frequent Visitor of the Public Library;
> Borrower of the Most and Best Books;
> First Reader of the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin; (p. 49)

In the second category of resources are pieces to which students respond with personal parallels or reactions. A recent list includes the following:

> "The Graffiti Poet," a poem by Nancy Willard
> The bonsai passage from "Slow Sculpture," a short story by Theodore Sturgeon
> Buckminster Fuller to Children of Earth, a book by Buckminster Fuller
> I See a Child, a book by Cindy Herbert
> The Geranium on the Window Sill Just Died but Teacher You Went Right On, childrens' poems collected by Albert Cullum
> "Students' Right to Read," NCTE
> "Students' Right to Their Own Language," NCTE

The Angry Book and Love Me, Love My Fool, two books by Theodore Isaac Rubin
Pilgrimage, science fiction by Zenna Henderson
Venus Plus X, science fiction by Theodore Sturgeon
"Why I Quit," an article in Changing Education by Diana L. George
"It's Tough to Tell a High School from a Prison," an article in Psychology Today by Craig Haney and Philip Zimbardo
"Why Jessie Hates English," an article in The Saturday Review by Sloan Wilson
Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, a book by Robert Pirsig
Future Shock, a book by Alvin Toffler
Learning for Tomorrow: The Role of the Future in Education, essays collected by Alvin Toffler
Education and Ecstasy and The Transformation, two books by George B. Leonard
Places Where I've Done Time, a book by William Saroyan
The Vanishing Adolescent and Growing Up in America, two books by Edgar Z. Friedenberg

The sourcebook, then, is a collection of views and re-views about school. It contains what students discover about themselves as lifelong pupils and about the profession of teaching. It is not wholly an answer book, for part of its purpose is to pose questions about teaching and learning, teachers and students. Both the questions and answers are vital in any program that prepares teachers who understand their own sources.

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